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Contents

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THE COVER Retaining Wall, 1934, by Ranch S. Kimball, litho crayon, 11 1/2" x 15 1/2". Kimball (1894-1980) made eighteen pastel drawings and one litho crayon drawing documenting Civilian Conservation Corps activities in Utah. Photograph of drawing courtesy of the Utah Arts Council.

Deer Creek

Out of the Depression's Depths: Henry H. Blood's First Year as Governor

BY R. THOMAS QUINN



Governor Henry H. Blood signing a bill requiring the licensing of plumbers. Man at extreme left is unidentified. The others are, left to right, Lester Bills, Angus Scott, and Bill Bywater. USHS collections.

ON JANUARY 2, 1933, A SOLEMN CROWD OF UTAHNS assembled on Capitol Hill to witness the inauguration of their seventh governor, Henry H. Blood. The natural chill of that winter day was worsened

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Secretary of War George H. Dern, the first Utahn to serve in the Cabinet, helped Governor Blood meet with President Roosevelt. USHS collection.

highway construction. All the projects, Blood said, would "contribute to the permanent needs and future development of the state," ultimately pay for themselves, and provide many jobs during their construction.²⁹

During his four weeks in Washington the governor saw many officials, including the president, sat in many meetings, and achieved mixed success. He quickly discovered that the Public Works Administration (PWA) was not interested in individual projects at that time but was, instead, still trying to arrive at a total figure for public works that would be adequate for the entire nation. Therefore, the governor submitted his \$57 million program for Utah's share and went on to other business.³⁰

With the help of Secretary of War George H. Dern (Blood's predecessor as governor), he saw President Roosevelt and plugged for Utah's public works program, the silver interests, and highway construction. Blood became the most deeply embroiled and achieved his greatest success with his highway proposals. On his arrival in Washington the governor had found New Deal officials indifferent to

²⁹ Ibid., April 22, 19, 1933.

³⁰ Blood to Samuel H. Kimball, June 5, 1933, Governor Blood's Correspondence, 1933.

related business interests and between management and labor. Upon passage of the NIRA he had endorsed the NRA, saying: "This is no time for an unfair minority to continue its self-seeking policies; it is the time for courageous action on the part of employers and industries generally." He believed prosperity could be enjoyed by the whole people if the president's plans were carried out.⁴⁹

Blood appointed members to the Utah State Recovery Administration, and this group worked closely with the federally appointed Utah Recovery Committee of the NRA. Blood served as joint chairman of an executive committee drawn from both organizations. National codes covering interstate business and industrial trade associations were rapidly adapted to Utah's intrastate needs. Enforcement of the state codes was delegated to citizens committees in the various communities. How these local groups would handle violations was rather vague, but in extreme cases they could appeal to the state courts. The governor signed the first state code, which covered Utah's coal industry—then rocked by labor strife—on September 26 and by the end of the year had approved sixteen more.⁵⁰

Blood had reluctantly vetoed as unconstitutional a bill declaring a moratorium on mortgages passed by the regular session of the legislature. Since then, Congress had enacted the Home Owners Loan Act (HOLA) which provided federal funds to refinance home loans. The HOLA was deluged with applications and could process them but slowly. In the meantime, Utah home owners had their backs to the wall. In August, Blood called a meeting of Utah's bankers and loan company officers and persuaded them to voluntarily grant a ninety-day moratorium, during which time Utahns could apply for federal refinancing and receive replies.⁵¹ The move was successful, and by the end of the year HOLA had forestalled mortgage foreclosures for 353 Utah families at a cost of \$881,000. Farmers benefitted from the mortgage moratorium, too, and received a similar refinancing service from the government via the Farm Credit Act.

Historically, Utahns had experienced chronic water shortages. Although 1933 was a fairly dry year in Utah, it gave only a hint of what was to come. Blood hoped that the PWA would help in the

⁴⁹ Untitled and undated [June] press statement, Governor Blood's Correspondence, 1933.

⁵⁰ "Minutes of Joint Committee, August 19, 1933, in *ibid.*; *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 10, September 27, December 8, 1933. See Helen Z. Papanikolas, "Unionism, Communism, and the Great Depression: The Carbon County Coal Strike of 1933," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 41 (1973): 254-300, for details of the labor unrest.

⁵¹ *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 2, 1933.



Deer Creek dam site on the Provo River. This Bureau of Reclamation project was approved in late 1933 through the lobbying efforts of Governor Blood. USHS collections.

construction of dams and irrigation systems to alleviate this perennial problem. His expectations were bolstered when two dams, Pineview and Hyrum, were approved by the PWA in August. That same month, the State Emergency Committee on Public Works—which Blood set up with himself as an *ex officio* member and William R. Wallace, a Salt Lake businessman and former Chamber of Commerce official, as chairman—began sifting through other requests from cities, counties, school districts, and the state. The projects ranged from sewers to tunnels and from roads to reclamation projects.⁵²

One of the first decisions reached by the committee was to ask the governor to return to Washington and shepherd the Utah projects through the intricacies of the PWA bureaucracy. Blood set out on September 26 with a \$40 million portfolio of requests, including \$17

⁵² Elwood Mead, commissioner, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, to Blood, August 30, 1933, Governor Blood's Correspondence, 1933; *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 27, 1933.

million in reclamation projects for Moon Lake, Sanpete County, and Deer Creek.⁵³

His chief antagonist was PWA director Harold Ickes. During the eight weeks Blood was in Washington they confronted each other often—too often for Ickes, who confided to his diary:

A delegation from Utah, headed by Secretary Dern, and including ...Governor Blood...came into nag again about some reclamation projects for their state. This group has been hanging about Washington for more than three weeks. At intervals they come to see me, then they go to see Colonel Waite (Ickes's second in command), and then they go over to the White House. They seem to be proceeding on the theory that they can just wear down our resistance and get what they want.⁵⁴

Blood and Ickes looked at the problem differently. Blood put a high priority on his reclamation proposals, first, as a means of employment during their construction, and second, as essential to Utah farmers who often faced drought conditions. On the other hand, Ickes, supported by Secretary of Agriculture Wallace, viewed most reclamation projects as inimical to one of the major aims of the New Deal: to reduce crop surpluses. To these men more water meant more production, and more production would add to the existing surplus of commodities that were keeping farm prices down.⁵⁵

Blood haunted the PWA offices, trying to make people there see it his way. At first, Ickes and the PWA board put him off with promises of consideration "soon." But soon never came. Ickes finally told Blood that he had no intention of approving the reclamation projects for Utah unless FDR personally told him to do so. Blood accepted the challenge and went to see the president, who was busy. Blood was persistent and spent one entire day cooling his heels in a White House waiting room without seeing the president. Roosevelt, aware that Utah's governor was there, asked Dern what the problem was. Dern explained, and FDR arranged for Blood to see Ickes one more time. At that meeting, with the presidential blessing bestowed, Ickes reluctantly promised to approve at least part of the reclamation requests. A few weeks later \$4.5 million was granted to the Deer Creek and Moon Lake projects. "May God bless you and yours," Blood wired Roosevelt when the announcement was made.⁵⁶

⁵³ *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 8, September 27, 1933.

⁵⁴ Harold L. Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: The First Thousand Days, 1933-36* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), p.114.

⁵⁵ *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 1, 3, 1933.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, October 27, November 4, 8, 9, 17, 1933; Blood to Roosevelt, November 17, 1933, Governor Blood's Correspondence, 1933.

Though the governor's efforts to win acceptance of the reclamation projects by the PWA was the most frustrating and time consuming, delays in processing other requests submitted to the PWA added their strain to the governor's patience as well.

Utah had put in a bid for \$1.5 million for construction of such edifices as a home economics building at the Utah State Agricultural College and a library at the University of Utah. At one point, the PWA even "lost" the applications for these projects, but Blood "found" them. The "soon" gambit was used frequently, too. Determined not to be put off, he became thoroughly nettled. Usually an even-tempered and soft-spoken man, Blood, after one particularly unsatisfying meeting with the PWA board, snapped:

We are facing an emergency in Utah.... You promised action in four or five days; that program (state buildings) has been before you now for thirteen days.... With intelligent handling, there is no reason why that program should not have been acted upon in an hour or two, yet thirteen days have been allowed to elapse.

A week later the governor got the approval he sought, and the colleges and other state agencies got their new buildings.⁵⁷

Most of a \$12 million city, county, and school district collection of requests were also held up—but for once not by the molasses-slow PWA. These proposals were submitted but laid aside at the governor's suggestion until a decision affecting them was rendered by the Utah State Supreme Court. Constitutionally, political subdivisions were limited in their bonding capacity, and many such limits had already been reached. The question before the state's highest court was whether the legislation passed by the special session lifted the bonding lid. The new laws specifically authorized political units of the state to enter into long-term contracts with the federal government for loans to construct public works. Taking these loans from the government would have the same effect as being indebted from bond sales, but the difference was that the state government guaranteed to pay the interest charges from the sales tax revenue. The court did not pass on the subject until Blood had returned to Utah, so he could do little for the projects while in Washington. When the decision did come it upheld the constitutionality of the special session's enactments. This could have started the PWA wheels rolling again, but Ickes kept on the brakes. On December 6 he

⁵⁷ *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 27, October 1, 12, 18, 1933.

Utah's Great Drought of 1934

BY LEONARD J. ARRINGTON



WPA workers lined this irrigation canal near Orem, Utah, to conserve water. WPA photograph, courtesy of National Archives.

*Blue NRA eagle,
symbol of
compliance with
fair competition
codes, was
displayed by
hundreds of Utah
businesses.*



in February of 1935.¹⁷ The state approved a 2 percent sales tax to help fund Utah's participation in the federal NIRA programs.¹⁸

On March 21, 1933, President Roosevelt requested a massive infusion of federal relief of three kinds: a job corps called the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), direct cash grants to the states to provide relief payments for needy citizens, and public works projects. On March 31 Congress approved the CCC, which ultimately put 2.5 million young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five to work planting trees, clearing camping areas, and building bridges, dams, reservoirs, fish ponds, and fire towers. On May 12 Congress passed the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA), which authorized \$500 million in aid to state and local governments. The proposed plan for public works became Title II of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA). It established the Public Works Administration (PWA) with a fund of \$3.3 billion to build roads, sewage and water systems, public buildings, and a host of other projects. The purpose

¹⁷ Dee Scrup, "A History of Organized Labor in Utah" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1935), p. 12.

¹⁸ *Deseret News*, August 2, 1933.

of PWA was to prime the economic pump—to stimulate consumer buying power, business enterprise, and employment.

During the consideration of these relief bills, Governor Blood made two trips to Washington, D.C., and spent a total of three weeks lobbying to secure public works projects and federal funds for Utah.¹⁹ His lobbying effort was consistent with public opinion in the state. A majority of Utahns approved the purposes and the content of the CCC, PWA, AAA, NIRA, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Home Owners Loan Corporation, federal—with emphasis on the federal—welfare aid, and other New Deal programs.

For example, the Civilian Conservation Corps, which involved large expenditures of federal money, was relatively popular in Utah, perhaps partly because no state matching money was required for participation. Additionally, CCC seemed to provide an opportunity for creative experimentation. Within Utah where so much land is part of the public domain and where so many acres are uninhabited there were numerous possibilities to develop and perfect projects in conservation and reclamation. In 1937 when President Roosevelt began budget cuts with the thought that the private sector was healthy enough to continue the recovery, Utahns were concerned that

¹⁹ *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 15, 1933.



Road project on West North Temple, Salt Lake City, April 1933, provided relief work for the unemployed. USHS collections.